

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:54
ANSWERED ON:21.11.2001
CRITICISM OF INDIAN SECULARISM
TUFANI SAROJ

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the foreign department of America has criticised India's secularism in its annual report released in October 2001;
- (b) if so, the details of the observations made therein against India;
- (c) whether the Government of India agree with the observations;
- (d) if not, the reasons therefor;
- (e) whether the Government of India have lodged their protests with the Government of America in this regard; and
- (f) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH)

(a) & (b) There is no 'foreign department'. However, the U.S. State Department's Congressionally-mandated Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, released on October 26, 2001, affirms that India is a secular state. It also contains certain adverse comments. It also notes that personal and property disputes occasionally acquire a religious colour. The Report has commented positively on the Constitutional provisions for freedom of religion and the role of the National Commission for Minorities and the National Human Rights Commission of India.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) In conformity with the Constitution and India's international legal obligations, Government offers full protection to minorities and prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) Government does not comment on an exercise that is part of the internal processes of any foreign government.